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A HERO OF THE ANTI-SLAVERY  
MOVEMENT

THE STORY OF  
ISAAC HOPPER

HENRY RAWLINGS, M.A.

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*James T. Hopper*  
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A Hero of the Anti-Slavery  
Movement


THE STORY OF  
ISAAC HOPPER

BY  
HENRY RAWLINGS, M.A.

London

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION  
Essex Hall, Essex Street, Strand, W.C.

1912



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## A Hero of the Anti-Slavery Movement ISAAC HOPPER

### BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

**T**HE names of some of the men and women who helped the slave to freedom are well known—such as that of William Lloyd Garrison. But in this, as in every struggle against a great social wrong, the principal leaders could have done little without a multitude of supporters, some of whom were hardly less worthy of remembrance than those leaders themselves. Such was Isaac Tatem Hopper. His name is seldom heard, at least in England, but Garrison himself, accepting an invitation to stay with him in New York, wrote: ‘There is no one in the world for whom I entertain more veneration and esteem than for yourself.’ Would it not be surprising if the life of the man thus addressed were not worthy of some record?

*Ugho - 11/11/11*

Hopper was born on December 3rd, 1771, near Woodbury, in West New Jersey. The home was a very simple one. It was a mere hen-house which Isaac's father had been allowed to bring away from the old homestead when he married. He had set it down near a great oak in the midst of five or six hundred acres of wild woodland, which he was to clear and farm. He and his wife had been neighbours and playmates from childhood, and this was the very spot which they had long ago fixed upon for their future dwelling.

### A COUNTRY BOY

Isaac was the second child born in the adapted hen-house, and he was eighteen months old before a new log-house was built for the family. The boy was put to work on the farm as soon as he could use a hoe. This does not mean that he had no schooling. Like most country lads in America at that time, he went to school for the three midwinter months of the year, but that was all. On a farm every one was required to make himself as useful as possible ; there was always



so much to be done. And, besides, Isaac's parents were connected with those serious, practical people, the Quakers, who have always honoured labour as well as learning. All the same, however, young Hopper seems to have found or made plenty of time for frolic. Both body and mind were full of energy, and he was constantly doing surprising things. While he was a small fellow in petticoats, he ran into a duck-pond to explore its depth. His mother pulled him out, and said, 'Isaac, if you ever go there again I will make you come out faster than you went in.' He thought to himself, 'Now I will prove mother to be in the wrong, for I will go in as fast as I can, and surely I can't come out any faster.' So into the pond he went forthwith. There is logic for you ! He could not resist the temptation to play harmless jokes, and sometimes thoughtlessness made his ingenuity dangerous. He not only used to tie boughs together in narrow paths, so that persons coming along in the dark night should suddenly meet strange hindrances ; but one day he suspended a brick among some boughs and almost caused his schoolmaster in

playing with him to get a stunning blow. One way in which he liked to show his strength and agility was by climbing trees and coming down quickly head foremost, clinging to the trunk with his feet. Courage seemed to be natural to him. One day, after war had broken out between the American Colonies and the Mother-country, Isaac found some British soldiers who had been scouring the neighbourhood for provisions, on the point of driving off his pet lamb. Exclaiming, 'That's my lamb, and you shan't have it,' he sprang into the cart and cut the rope which bound the lamb's feet. A struggle followed, and a British officer rode up to see what was the matter. 'They've stolen my lamb,' said Isaac, 'and they shan't have it! It's my lamb.' 'Is it your lamb, my brave little fellow?' said the officer. 'Well, they shan't have it. You'll make a fine soldier one of these days.' That prophecy was fulfilled, though not as the officer meant it. There are different kinds of soldiers. Hopper became a fighter, but he used no bullets and bayonets, and he destroyed no lives, though he saved many.

## SELF-CONQUEST

But first he had to fight with himself, for he soon realized that he was liable to go wrong through selfishness, as well as mere thoughtlessness. He and his brother used to catch partridges with traps, and one day he was so disappointed to find a bird in his brother's trap, but none in his own, that he pretended the bird was his, and continued to claim it even when the brother pointed out the feathers left in his trap. But the lie made him so unhappy that first thing next morning he went to his mother and confessed it, and she sent him to confess to his brother.

Being a very bright, manly boy, he was trusted to carry grain several miles to mill, when he was only eight years old. On one of these occasions he arrived just as another boy, who preceded him, had alighted to open the gate. 'Just let me drive in before you shut it,' said Isaac, 'and then I shall have no need to get down from my wagon.' The boy patiently held the gate for him to pass through; but Isaac, without stopping to thank him, whipped up his horse, arrived at the mill post haste, and

claimed the right to be first served, because he was the first comer. When the other boy found he was compelled to wait, he looked very much dissatisfied, but said nothing. Isaac chuckled over his victory at first, but his natural sense of justice soon suggested better thoughts. He asked himself whether he had done right thus to take advantage of that obliging boy? The longer he reflected upon it the more uncomfortable he felt. At last, he went up to the stranger and said frankly, 'I did wrong to drive up to the mill so fast, and get my own corn ground, when you were so obliging as to hold the gate open for me to pass through. I was thinking of nothing but fun when I did it; here's sixpence to make up for it.' The boy was well pleased with the amends thus honourably offered, and they parted right good friends. The lad who could 'own up' and make amends in this way had the right spirit in him.

### 'THE LITTLE GOVERNOR'

At the age of nine he began to drive a wagon to Philadelphia to sell vegetables

and other things from his father's farm, and in the market there his dress and air and manner of doing business soon won for him the name 'The Little Governor.' He wore the usual broad-brimmed hat, small-clothes and stockings, but he distinguished himself by cleanliness and neatness, and even by special smartness ; for with money earned by catching and selling rabbits he bought brass buckles for his knees and shoes. What a quaint picture does this description call up in the mind. No wonder customers liked to deal with this self-respecting little fellow. And part of his self-respect was transparent honesty. Asked one day what was the price of a pair of chickens, he replied, 'My father told me to sell them for 50 cents, if I could ; and if not, to take 40.' This pleased as well as amused the customer, and he promised to buy from the boy as much as possible, paying him, as he did in this instance, the current price.

### LOVE OF ANIMALS

Three other things should be mentioned now concerning those early years.

And, first, his love of animals and his interest in their ways. He had a remarkable gift for winning the confidence of wild creatures. He did not like to confine them in cages, but he generally had some pet, a squirrel or a crow, for instance, which, though living in a free condition, would come at his call. Experience soon revealed to him that to watch the habits of animals and to enter into their feelings was nobler and gave more satisfaction than the thoughtless passion for hunting. One Sunday morning when he was about ten, he invited a number of boys to join him in pelting the swallows which built their nests in a barn near by. The party set off in high spirits, but before they reached the place young Hopper was in another mood. He had realized the meaning of what he proposed and how cruel it was. He told his companions this, and surprised them by refusing to go further. He was a first-rate shot with bow and arrow, or with gun, and one day he proved his skill by sending an arrow through two king-birds at once. The king-bird, though handsome with its orange-coloured crest, is not loved by



the farmer, because it destroys bees. This pair had their nest in the orchard, and the boy may well have thought, 'we cannot have such enemies so near.' But he knew that the nest contained young; and after he had killed the parent birds, the thought of the hungry and unprotected little ones would not leave his mind. Never after this could he find any pleasure in shooting.

## MEN WHO MADE HISTORY

The second fact which must be mentioned is this, that he had opportunities of seeing many of the famous men of the time, and especially General Washington and Benjamin Franklin. These men used to get clothes made by a certain tailor in Philadelphia, who was uncle to young Hopper, and sometimes had him on a visit. Those were his chances for admiring his heroes in person, and well did he use them. One day he followed Washington a long distance when he left the shop. The great man observed the boy's rapt admiration, and was amused by it. At last he turned round suddenly, touched

his hat and made a low bow. Young Hopper was so surprised and bewildered that he could only blush and walk away ; he did not even return the bow. He had not yet learned the forms of reverence, but the whole incident shows that he had the spirit of it.

### A SOLEMN VOW

The third fact is this, that when he was only nine years old, he made a solemn vow that he would be the friend of the negro slaves as long as he lived. This came about in the following way. When he drove the cows to and from pasture, he often met an old coloured man named Mingo. His sympathizing heart was attracted towards him, because he had heard the neighbours say he was stolen from Africa when he was a little boy. One day he asked Mingo what part of the world he came from, and the poor old man told how he was playing with other children among the bushes, on the coast of Africa, when white men pounced upon them suddenly and dragged them off to a ship. He held fast hold of the thorny bushes, which



tore his hands dreadfully in the struggle. The old man wept like a child when he told how he was frightened and distressed at being thus hurried away from father, mother, brothers, and sisters, and sold into slavery in a distant land, where he could never see or hear from them again. This was enough for Isaac Hopper. Slavery must be cruel, if it began in such a way.

## A RUNAWAY SLAVE

He was just over sixteen when he was first called upon to take an important practical step in fulfilment of his vow. He had gone to Philadelphia and was helping his uncle in his business. One day a sea captain named Cox, who had come to the house on a visit, brought in a negro named Joe, and declared that he was a runaway slave, for he knew his master in Bermuda. Joe admitted that he was this man's slave, but denied that he was a runaway. He had, he said, accidentally missed the ship by which he should have returned to his master after a leave of absence, and was only waiting for the next; in fact, he was

delighted to see some one whom he knew and who could help him. Cox seemed satisfied, and said that a vessel would sail for Bermuda in a few days, and meanwhile Joe must remain in his charge. That evening Hopper found Joe sitting in the kitchen, utterly miserable ; and, doubting whether he had told the real facts about himself, he took him aside and said : ‘ Tell me truly how the case stands with you. I will be your friend, and come what will, you may be certain that I will never betray you.’ Joe’s first reply was an anxious piercing look. Only after being most solemnly assured of goodwill and secrecy did he confess that he was a runaway, that he had been let out to work on board a ship going to New York, that he had longed for freedom, and on arriving in port had escaped. Hopper at once resolved that Joe should keep his freedom, and, after consultation with a neighbour, he had a plan ready. Joe was to make his way to the house of a certain Quaker many miles north of Philadelphia, where he would receive kindness and be put into a situation. Meanwhile, however, Captain Cox came and ordered Joe to go on board

a vessel by which he had booked a passage for him. Joe thanked him and went. But one evening before the vessel started he obtained leave to return to the house for some clothes, and was soon on his way to his promised refuge. Walking through the moonlight night, he arrived at dawn and found every promise fulfilled. He enjoyed freedom and comfort to the end of his days.

## FIERCE-HEART

This was but the first of a long series of rescues in which Hopper played a prominent part. He became renowned for the courage and skill with which he managed such cases, and the slave-holders in time learned that his quiet tenacity and his resourcefulness were more dangerous to them than more violent methods. These latter methods were no small temptation to the muscular young fellow, and only by stern self-discipline did he get control of his impulsive strength. One incident in particular shows us what a fight he had still to carry on with himself. Among his uncle's apprentices was a big bully who liked to

play the tyrant over his younger and weaker companions. Many a time was Hopper's indignation aroused by the conduct of this brute, but he felt he could do nothing to check him. One day, however, when he himself was knocked down by the bully for no reason whatever, he was so angry that he exclaimed, 'If you ever do that again, I'll kill you. Mind what I say. I tell you, I'll kill you.' The Samson laughed as at an idle threat, and the next morning he knocked him down again. But Hopper's threat was not idle. He armed himself with a heavy iron bar, stood behind a door as the apprentices went into breakfast, and as the tyrant was passing, struck him to the ground. Hopper calmly took his place at the table, and when his uncle asked why an apprentice was absent he promptly answered, 'I've killed him.' 'Killed him?' exclaimed the uncle. 'What do you mean?' 'I told him I would kill him if he ever knocked me down again,' rejoined Hopper; 'and I have killed him.' Nor was the statement far from the truth. It was some time before his victim recovered consciousness, and it

was many weeks before he was well. This incident shows with what energy Hopper's feelings might flame up. But it was a lesson to him. When he saw the helpless body of his companion, and realized what murder was and how near he had come to this crime, he was filled with horror and remorse. He realized that no feeling, however natural or just, should be allowed to blaze uncontrolled.

### JOINS THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Before many years Isaac had taken two important steps. At the age of twenty-two he applied for admission into the Society of Friends, and was received as a member. He could not claim 'birthright membership,' for his grandfather had been disowned by the Society for marrying a non-Friend, and his father, though worshipping and associating with Quakers, had never applied for membership. Isaac's application was, therefore, the result of serious thought and deliberate choice. It was in fact the result of convictions which he never changed. To the end of his life he loved and revered Quaker principles,

as he understood them. As we shall see, however, his loyalty to these principles brought him into much conflict even with Friends themselves. But at the age of twenty-four he took a step which made this and all other troubles much easier to bear—he married a young woman whom he had known from childhood, who was as good as she was beautiful. It was not an easy life which he asked her to share with him. Economy and simplicity had to be the law of his home, for though the income which he earned as a tailor (his sole employment for many years) was but moderate, the family to be provided for became in time numerous, and he was always swift to spend both his strength and his means in helping the oppressed and afflicted. Chief among the latter were the coloured people, both free and enslaved. The free needed above all things education, and so we find Hopper acting as one of the managers of a school for coloured children, and also teaching two or three nights a week in a school for coloured adults. But as a member of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, his principal work was helping fugitive

slaves. Sometimes the fugitive was enabled to keep altogether out of the hands of the pursuer ; sometimes the pursuer caught him (or pretended to have caught him, the victim being another slave, or even a free man), and then a protector was needed to point out before the magistrate any defect in the evidence. This was most necessary, because the magistrate received a fee for every case in which he yielded to the slave-hunter's claim and no fee when he rejected a claim. But sometimes, of course, the claim was proved, and then Isaac Hopper had the sad experience of seeing poor liberty-loving men and women dragged back into slavery. During his forty years' residence in Philadelphia, Hopper came to the assistance of slaves, or persons seized as slaves, in about a thousand instances. The stories told in the following chapter will show what kind of work he set himself to do, and how he did it.

## BEN JACKSON

Ben was born a slave in Virginia. When he was about sixteen years old he began to think that a just and good



God could not have meant that one man should be born to toil for another without wages, to be driven about and treated like a beast of the field. The older he grew, the more heavily did these thoughts press upon him. At last, when he was about twenty-five years old, he resolved to gain his liberty. He left his master, and, after encountering many difficulties, arrived in Philadelphia, where he took service on board a vessel and went several voyages. When he was thirty years of age he married, and was employed as a coachman by Dr. Benjamin Rush, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. He lived with him two years ; and when he left, Dr. Rush gave him a paper certifying that he was a free man, honest, sober, and capable.

In 1799 his master came to Philadelphia and arrested him as his fugitive slave. Before he could take him back to Virginia, however, he had to obtain a certificate from a magistrate, and fortunately the magistrate applied to was Joseph Bird, who detested slavery. Ben played his part with great skill. Neither admitting nor denying that he was a



slave, he merely showed the certificate of Dr. Rush, and requested that Isaac T. Hopper might be informed of his situation. The magistrate agreed to this, and, committing Ben to prison until morning, sent a note to Isaac Hopper telling him of the case and requesting him to call upon Dr. Rush. When the doctor was questioned, he said he knew nothing about Ben's early history ; he lived with him two years, and was *then* a free man.

### HOPPER'S DEVICE

When Hopper went to the prison, he found Ben in a state of great anxiety and distress. He admitted that he was the slave of the man who claimed him, and that he saw no way of escape open for him. His friend told him not to be discouraged, and promised to exert himself to the utmost in his behalf. But what could be done ? Well, Hopper had noticed that the constable had expressed sympathy and had even promised to do what he could. This suggested an idea. He urged the constable to bring Ben to the magistrate's office a short time

before nine o'clock, the hour appointed for the trial. He did so, and found Hopper already there, watching the clock. The moment the hand pointed to nine, he remarked that the hour had already arrived ; no evidence had been brought that the man was a slave ; on the contrary, Dr. Rush's certificate was strong presumptive evidence of his being a free man ; he therefore demanded that the prisoner should be discharged. Justice Bird, having no desire to throw obstacles in the way, promptly told Ben he was at liberty, and he lost no time in profiting by the information. Just as he passed out of the door, he saw his master coming, and ran full speed. He had sufficient presence of mind to take a zigzag course, and, running through a house occupied by coloured people, he succeeded in getting away.

### MAN-HUNTERS

When Hopper went home, he found Ben at his house. He tried to impress upon his mind the peril he would incur by remaining in Philadelphia, and advised him by all means to go to sea.

But his wife was strongly attached to him, and so unwilling to consent in this plan, that he concluded to run the risk of staying with her. He remained concealed about a week, and then returned to the house he had previously occupied. They lived in the second story, and there was a shed under their bedroom window. Ben placed a ladder under the window, to be ready for escape ; but it was so short that it did not reach the roof of the shed by five or six feet. His wife was an industrious, orderly woman, and kept their rooms as neat as a beehive. The only thing which marred their happiness was the continual dread that man-hunters might pounce upon them, in some unguarded hour, and separate them for ever. About a fortnight after his arrest, they were sitting together in the dusk of the evening, when the door was suddenly burst open and his master rushed in with a constable.

## ESCAPE

Ben sprang out of the window, down the ladder, and made his escape. His master and the constable followed ; but

as soon as they were on the ladder, Ben's wife cut the cord that held it, and they tumbled heels over head upon the shed. This bruised them a good deal, and frightened them still more. They scrambled upon their feet, cursing roundly.

Ben arrived safely at the house of Isaac Hopper, who induced him to quit the city immediately and go to sea. His first voyage was to the East Indies. While he was gone Hopper negotiated with the master, who, finding there was little chance of regaining his slave, agreed to set him free for one hundred and fifty dollars. As soon as Ben returned he repaid from his wages the sum which had been advanced for his ransom. His wife's health was greatly impaired by the fear and anxiety she had endured on his account. She became a prey to melancholy, and never recovered her former cheerfulness.

### WILLIAM BACHELOR

It was a common thing for speculators in slaves to purchase runaways for much less than their original value, and take the risk of not being able to catch them.

In the language of the trade this was called ‘buying them running.’

In April, 1802, Joseph Ennells and Captain Frazer, of Maryland, dealers in slaves, purchased a number in this way, and came to Philadelphia in search of them. There they arrested and claimed as their property William Bachelor, a free coloured man, about sixty years old. A coloured man, whom the slave-dealers brought with them, swore before a magistrate that William Bachelor once belonged to a gang of slaves of which he was overseer; that he had changed his name, but that he knew him perfectly well.

William affirmed in the most earnest manner that he was a free man; but Mr. Ennells and Captain Frazer appeared to be such respectable men, and the coloured witness swore so positively, that the magistrate granted a certificate authorizing them to take him to Maryland.

As they left the office they were met by Dr. Kinley, who knew William Bachelor well and had a great regard for him. Finding that his protestations had no effect with the Marylanders, he ran with all speed to Isaac Hopper, and

entering his door almost out of breath, exclaimed, 'They've got old William Bachelor and are taking him to the South as a slave. I know him to be a free man. Many years ago he was a slave to my father, and he manumitted him. He used to carry me in his arms when I was an infant. He was a most faithful servant.'

### POLITE BUT FIRM

Hopper inquired which way the party had gone, and was informed that they went towards 'Gray's Ferry.' He immediately started in pursuit and overtook them. He accosted Mr. Ennells politely, and told him he had made a mistake in capturing William Bachelor, for he was a free man.

Ennells drew a pistol from his pocket, and said, 'We have had him before a magistrate and proved to his satisfaction that the fellow is my slave. I have got his certificate, and that is all that is required to authorize me to take him home. I will blow your brains out if you say another word on the subject, or make any attempt to molest me.'

‘If thou wert not a coward, thou wouldst not try to intimidate me with a pistol,’ replied Isaac. ‘I do not believe thou hast the least intention of using it in any other way; but thou art much agitated, and may fire it accidentally; therefore I request thee not to point it toward me, but to turn it the other way. It is in vain for thee to think of taking this old man to Maryland. If thou wilt not return to the city voluntarily, I will certainly have thee stopped at the bridge, where thou wilt be likely to be handled much more roughly than I am disposed to do.’

While this controversy was going on poor William Bachelor was in the greatest anxiety of mind. ‘Oh, Master Hopper,’ he exclaimed, ‘don’t let them take me! I am not a slave. All the people in Philadelphia know I am a free man. I never was in Maryland in my life.’

Ennells, hearing the name, said, ‘So your name is Hopper, is it? I have heard of you. It’s time the world was rid of you. You have done too much mischief already.’

When Friend Hopper inquired what mischief he had done, he replied, ‘You



have robbed many people of their slaves.'

'Thou art mistaken,' rejoined the Quaker, 'I only prevent Southern marauders from robbing people of their liberty.'

After much dispute it was agreed to return to the city; and William was again brought before the alderman who had so hastily surrendered him. Dr. Kinley and so many other respectable citizens attended as witnesses that even Ennells himself was convinced that his captive was a free man. He was accordingly set at liberty.

### TURNING THE TABLES

It was, however, generally believed that Mr. Ennells knew he was not a slave when he arrested him. It was therefore concluded to prosecute him for attempting to take forcibly a free man out of the State and carry him into slavery.

When Hopper went to his lodgings with a warrant and two constables for this purpose, he found him writing, with a pistol on each side of him. The moment they entered, he seized a pistol



and ordered them to withdraw or he would shoot them.

Hopper replied, 'These men are officers, and have a warrant to arrest thee for attempting to carry off a free man into slavery. I advise thee to lay down thy pistol and go with us. If not, a sufficient force will soon be brought to compel thee. Remember thou art in the heart of Philadelphia. It is both foolish and imprudent to attempt to resist the law. A pistol is a very unnecessary article here, whatever it may be elsewhere. According to appearances, thou dost not attempt to use it for any other purpose than to frighten people; and thou hast not succeeded in doing that.'

Rage could do nothing in the presence of such calmness; and Ennells consented to go with them to the magistrate. On the way he quarrelled with one of the constables, and gave him a severe blow on the face with his cane. The officer knocked him down, and would have repeated the blow if Hopper had not interfered. Assisting Ennells to rise, he said, 'Thou hadst better take my arm and walk with me. I think we can agree better.'

When the transaction had been investigated before a magistrate, Mr. Ennells was bound over to appear at the next Mayor's court and answer to the charge against him. The proprietor of the hotel where he lodged became his bail. Meanwhile numerous letters came from people of repute in Maryland and Virginia, testifying to his good character. His lawyer showed these letters to Hopper, and proposed that the prosecution should be abandoned. He replied that he had no authority to act in the matter himself; but he knew the Abolition Society had commenced the prosecution from no vindictive feelings, but merely with the view of teaching people to be careful how they infringed on the rights of free men. The Committee of that Society met the same evening, and agreed to dismiss the suit, Mr. Ennells paying the costs, to which he readily assented.

### DANIEL BENSON

Daniel and his mother were slaves to Perry Boots, of Delaware. His master was in the habit of letting him out to

neighbouring farmers and receiving the wages himself. Daniel had married a free woman, and they had several children, mostly supported by her industry. His mother was old and helpless; and the master, finding it rather burdensome to support her, he told Daniel that if he would take charge of her, and pay him forty dollars a year, he might go where he pleased.

The offer was gladly accepted, and in 1805 he removed to Philadelphia with his mother and family. He sawed wood for a living, and soon won such a name for industry and honesty, that many of the citizens were in the habit of employing him to purchase their wood and prepare it for the winter.

Upon one occasion, when he brought in a bill to Alderman Todd, that gentleman asked if he had not charged rather high. Daniel excused himself by saying that he had an aged mother to support, in addition to his own family, and that he punctually paid his master twenty dollars every six months, according to an agreement he had made with him. When the Alderman heard the particulars his sympathy was excited, and he wrote a note

to Isaac Hopper, requesting him to examine into the case, and stating his own opinion that Daniel had a legal right to freedom. The wood-sawyer started off eagerly with the note and in delivering it exclaimed, 'Squire Todd thinks I am free!' He was in a state of great agitation between hope and fear. When he had told his story, he was sent home to get receipts for all the money he had paid his master since his arrival in Philadelphia. It was easy to prove from these that he had been a resident in Pennsylvania, with his owner's consent, a much longer time than the six months which the law required to make him a free man. When Isaac Hopper gave him this information he was overjoyed. He could hardly believe it. The tidings seemed too good to be true. When assured that he was certainly free beyond all dispute, and that he need not pay any more of his hard earnings to a master, the tears came to his eyes, and he started off to bring his wife, that she also might hear the glad news. When Friend Hopper was an old man he often used to remark how well he remembered their beaming countenances

on that occasion, and their warm expressions of gratitude to God.

### AN ANGRY MASTER

Soon after this interview a letter was addressed to Perry Boots, informing him that his slave was legally free, and that he need not expect to receive any more of his wages. He came to Philadelphia immediately to answer the letter in person. His first salutation was, 'Where can I find that ungrateful villain Dan? I will take him home in irons.'

Hopper replied, 'Thou wilt find thyself relieved from such an unpleasant task, for I can easily convince thee that the law sustains thy slave in taking his freedom.'

Reading the law did not satisfy him. He said he would consult a lawyer, and call again. When he returned he found Daniel waiting to see him, and he immediately began to upbraid him for being so ungrateful.

### A SOFT ANSWER

Daniel replied, 'Master Perry, it was not *justice* that made me your slave. It was the *law*, and you took advantage

of it. Now, the law makes me free ; and ought you to blame me for taking the advantage which it offers me ? But suppose I were not free, what would you be willing to take to manumit me ? ’

His master, somewhat softened, said, ‘ Why, Dan, I always intended to set you free some time or other.’

‘ I am nearly forty years old,’ rejoined his bondsman ; ‘ if I am ever to be free, I think it is high time now. What would you be willing to take for a deed of manumission ? ’

Mr. Boots answered, ‘ Why, I think you ought to give me a hundred dollars.’

‘ Would that satisfy you, Master Perry ? Well, I can pay you a hundred dollars,’ said Daniel.

Here Hopper interfered, and observed there was nothing rightfully due to the master ; that if justice were done in the case, he ought to pay Daniel for his labour since he was twenty-one years old.

The coloured man replied, ‘ I was a slave to Master Perry’s father, and he was kind to me. Master Perry and I are about the same age. We were brought up more like two brothers than

like master and slave. I can better afford to give him a hundred dollars than he can afford to do without it. I will go home and get the money if you will make out the necessary papers while I am gone.'

Surprised and gratified by the nobility of soul manifested in these words, Isaac Hopper said no more to dissuade him from his generous purpose. He brought one hundred silver dollars, and Perry Boots signed a receipt for it, accompanied by a deed of manumission. He wished to have it inserted in the deed that he was not to be responsible for the support of the old woman. But Daniel objected, saying, 'Such an agreement would imply that I would not voluntarily support my poor old mother.'

## IN HONOUR OF FREEDOM

When the business was concluded, he invited his former master and Friend Hopper to dine with him, saying, 'we are going to have a pretty good dinner in honour of the day.' Mr. Boots accepted the invitation, but Hopper excused himself on account of an engage-



ment that would detain him till after dinner. When he called, he found they had not yet risen from the table, on which were the remains of a roasted turkey, a variety of vegetables, and a decanter of wine. Friend Hopper smiled when Daniel remarked, ‘I know Master Perry loves a little brandy; but I did not like to get brandy, so I bought a quart of Mr. Morris’s best wine, and thought perhaps that would do instead. I never drink anything but water myself.’

Soon after Daniel Benson became a free man he gave up sawing wood, and opened a shop for the sale of second-hand clothing. He was successful in business, brought up his family very respectably, and supported his mother comfortably to the end of her days. For many years he was class-leader in a Methodist Church for coloured people, and his conduct gained the respect of all who knew him.

### CHARACTERISTICS

The foregoing stories show us clearly what kind of man Isaac Hopper was—how sympathetic, generous, and courageous was his heart; how clear, just,



and resourceful was his mind. No wonder he soon became one of the best known men in Philadelphia. 'Every schoolboy,' we are told, 'had heard something of his doings; and as he walked the streets everybody recognized him, from the Chief Justice to the chimney-sweep.' It was not only his work for the slaves which made him known in the street. For he was wonderfully apt in saying the right word concerning things which took place there. One day, when he saw a man beating his horse brutally, he stepped up to him and said very seriously, 'Dost thou know that some people think men change into animals when they die?' The man was surprised at the question, and answered that he knew of no one holding that belief. 'But some people do believe it,' rejoined Hopper; 'and they also believe that animals may become men. Now I am thinking if thou shouldst ever be a horse, and that horse should ever be a man, with such a temper as thine, the chance is thou wilt get some cruel beatings.' This neat thrust went home, and Hopper followed it up with more of his frank but friendly talk. Sometimes he

interfered in street affairs at considerable risk.

After a visit to Ireland, he could imitate the Irish brogue perfectly, and took great pleasure in making Irishmen believe that he was a fellow-countryman. It was more than fun, however, when he went up to two fighting Irishmen, and seizing one of them by the arm, said, 'I'm from ould Ireland. If thou *must* fight, I'm the man for thee. Thou hadst better let that poor fellow alone. I'm a dale stouter than he is; and sure it would be braver to fight me.' The effect was magical. The man gazed for a moment in astonishment, then burst out laughing, threw his coat across his arm, and walked away. The result was similar in another case. 'He's got my prayer-book, and I'll give him a bating for it; by St. Patrick, I will,' shouted one of the combatants. 'Let me give thee a piece of advice,' said the peace-maker. 'It's a very hot day, and bating is warm work. I'm thinking thou hadst better put it off till the cool of the morning'—words which cooled the man's temper at once.

It should be mentioned that Hopper's

outward appearance was very striking. For he kept to the old Quaker dress as worn by William Penn, and yet beneath the broad-brimmed hat the features were those of Napoleon. Joseph Bonaparte, the eldest brother of the Emperor, often spoke of this latter point. After the battle of Waterloo, he spent many years in America, and, living near Philadelphia, he frequently met Hopper on the Delaware steamboats. He used to say that he had never seen anyone so like the Emperor, and that Hopper, by appearing in Paris in appropriate uniform, might easily excite a revolution.

This outward resemblance is an interesting fact, for there was certainly a partial resemblance in character. Hopper was like Napoleon in strength of will, the only difference was that his feelings and aims were unselfish. He loved truth and justice, and where they led he followed cheerfully. Power and wealth he never sought, and power and wealth of the ordinary kind never came to him. The next cause that he took up helped to make him really poor in the world's goods, but he did not for a moment flinch.

## ELIAS HICKS

Among the Quakers in America there was at this time a remarkable man named Elias Hicks. He was a very eloquent speaker, and he spoke his thoughts boldly. He was firmly convinced that slavery was wrong, and he never hesitated to say so. He adopted and urged others to adopt every means short of violence by which the wealth and power of the slave-holders could be diminished. He even refused to eat or wear anything produced by slave labour, such as sugar and cotton. He used to say, 'It takes *live* fish to swim *up* stream,' and he showed his own live-ness by preaching more earnestly and directly against slavery when he was in slave States (such as Virginia or Carolina) than when he was in free States like New York and Pennsylvania, for the simple reason that it seemed to be more needed there. Upon one of his visits to Virginia, a slave-holder who came to hear him from curiosity, left the meeting in great wrath, swearing he would blow out that fellow's brains if he ventured near his plantation. When the preacher heard of this threat,

he put on his hat and went straight off to the forbidden place. In answer to his inquiries, a slave informed him that his master was then at dinner, but would see him in a short time. He seated himself and waited patiently until the planter entered the room. With a calm and dignified manner he thus addressed him : ‘ I understand thou hast threatened to blow out the brains of Elias Hicks, if he comes upon thy plantation. I am Elias Hicks.’ The Virginian acknowledged that he did make such a threat, and said he considered it perfectly justifiable to do such a deed, when a man came to preach rebellion to his slaves. ‘ I came,’ replied Hicks, ‘ to preach the Gospel, which bids slaves as well as other men forgive injuries. But tell me, if thou canst, how this Gospel can be *truly* preached, without showing the slaves that they are injured, and thus making a man of thy sentiments feel as if they were encouraged in rebellion ? ’ This led to a long argument, maintained in the most friendly spirit. At parting the slave-holder shook hands with the preacher, and invited him to come again. His visits were renewed, and six months

afterwards the Virginian emancipated all his slaves.

### CHARGED WITH HERESY

Not always among the Quakers themselves did Hicks meet with such open-mindedness. On the contrary, from many of them he received the most persistent opposition. Some of them were biased by their personal interests—they would lose business if slavery were interfered with. Some complained that Hicks's rousing appeals disturbed the calm of their meetings—the subject of slavery, they thought, was too controversial to be introduced there. Some even talked as though great evils like slavery would pass away of themselves, and as though God did not require men to work against them. And then besides, Hicks was charged with teaching doctrines which were not true Quakerism, but more like Unitarianism, and to many this name was in itself dreadful. But in reality, what seemed to his enemies a fault in Hicks was only this, that his religious faith was simple, and that he applied it in a very thorough

and practical way to the affairs of daily life.

For him God was the supreme and ever-living Spirit, the Power of Wisdom and Love, ever revealing himself anew in the world. Jesus was a messenger of the Divine Wisdom and Love. Believe those truths, and then what need is there to vex your mind with strange questions about three divine persons in one? Why waste your strength in trying to reconcile all parts of the Bible, and to wring some precious meaning out of every part? Our great duty is to apply in every sphere of life a few grand principles to which the Bible and the hearts of good men in every age bear witness. This was the line of thought which Elias Hicks took, and it explains why he was earnest against slavery, and against everything which seemed to lend it any support. Slavery was inconsistent with the ideas of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Men, therefore he was against slavery.

### THE HICKSITES

Naturally this kind of teaching, though bitterly opposed by some, was warmly



welcomed by others. These latter regarded Hicks as a true prophet and a noble leader, and they encouraged and supported him. Soon the controversy became so warm and so general that the Quakers seemed, says Mrs. Child, to be a Society of Enemies instead of a Society of Friends. And at last in 1827 the 'orthodox' and the 'Hicksites' (said to have been about 70,000 or half the Society in America) separated, and they have remained separate ever since.

### HOPPER'S FRIENDSHIP

Now Elias Hicks and Isaac Hopper were so like one another in character and way of thinking that they soon became fast friends, and Hopper took a leading part in the Hicksite movement. But to be a friend of Hicks was to lose the friendship of his enemies. And in this way Hopper lost many friends, and much business. This was a serious matter for him. For, owing to a long illness, and his always generous helping of others, he had run into debt. There was no reserve to meet fresh difficulties. His wife, however, and his numerous children

rallied round him with affectionate loyalty. They all agreed to live as simply as possible. Moreover, his wife opened a tea-store and his elder daughters went out to earn as teachers. One day on waking up from a nap in his chair, he found that some money had been secretly slipped into his pocket. It was the loving act of one of those daughters. She knew that a bill was waiting to be paid, and she wanted to pay it without saying so.

### A NEW OPENING

As time went on, a new opening presented itself. The Hicksites wished to set up a book-shop in New York for the sale of their writings, and Hopper was invited to take charge of it. He accepted, and removed from Philadelphia in 1829. In 1841 he undertook also similar duties for the Anti-Slavery Society. And now a strange thing happened. Elias Hicks had died in 1830, the zeal of many of his followers had cooled, some of them had fallen into stiff ideas and ways, like those of the 'orthodox' Friends whom they had left. Actually one preacher, whom the

majority seemed to approve, frequently denounced reformers of various kinds, but most of all abolitionists, whom he called hypocrites. He said on one occasion, 'I had a thousand times rather be a slave, and spend my days with slaveholders, than dwell in companionship with abolitionists.' At last, this and other strange utterances were severely rebuked in the journal of the Anti-Slavery Society under the heading 'Rare Specimen of a Quaker Preacher.' And hence came trouble for Isaac Hopper. For he and two of his Hicksite friends were on the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, and complaint was made against them that they had allowed the rebuking article to appear. The complaint was unreasonable, but it served its purpose. The Editor was responsible for the article, not Hopper and his friends, but they refused to condemn it, and so the complaint against them was vigorously pushed until they were 'disowned' by the Hicksite body, i.e., turned out of membership.

This incident has been described in a few words, but many words and much time were spent over it, and it often

made Hopper sad. He grieved to think that the Hicksites, after being persecuted, had turned persecutors. Still, he believed in Quakerism as he understood it, and he hoped the right spirit would prevail in the end. So he went on attending meeting as before, and even sat in his old place, which was a prominent one. This was his way of showing that, in his opinion, the Society had gone wrong and should change its course, not he. He was more patient than some members of his family, who made a protest by deserting the Society altogether.

## VIGOROUS OLD AGE

At this time Hopper was over seventy years old, but he was still strong and vigorous, and there were ten more years before him—years almost as busy and full of usefulness as any others. But there is only one part of his work during this period which requires special mention. In the year 1845 some of the leading citizens in New York met to form a Society for helping discharged prisoners to live by honest and useful work, and to avoid getting back into jail. Isaac

Hopper attended the meeting, and when he spoke, the general feeling was that he was the very person to act as the Society's agent. Being now free from some other duties, he accepted the post. The fact was that work amongst prisoners was by no means new to him. In Philadelphia he had been for many years one of the 'inspectors' of the prison—an unpaid officer whose duty it was to visit and supervise. He had taken this duty seriously, and had proved himself so real a friend to prisoners that he won a remarkable influence over them. He knew the defects of the old system of prison discipline, which was little more than harshness founded on fear. He used to give the following illustration of it, which he had from the mouth of his friend Dr. William Rogers.

### PRISON CHAPLAINS

Dr. Rogers was a clergyman in Philadelphia who belonged to the first Society founded in America for 'relieving the miseries of prison life.' In the year 1787 he obtained permission from the Sheriff to address prisoners on Sundays. But

the jail-keeper regarded the experiment with dread. He assured Dr. Rogers that his life would be in peril, and the most terrible things might happen. And when the fatal hour arrived, he actually had a loaded cannon mounted near the clergyman and a man standing ready with a lighted match all the time he was preaching, the prisoners being arranged in a solid column directly in front of the cannon's mouth. This is believed to have been the first sermon addressed to any similar body of prisoners in America. But by the time Isaac Hopper began to visit prisons, ideas had changed, and he gave addresses in the Philadelphia jail without the protection of cannon. The tone of these addresses is not difficult to imagine. He believed that punishment should not only hurt, it should also help. The wrongdoer must be made not only to grieve for the past, but also to hope for the future. After the punishment he must be allowed, and if necessary helped, to make a new start. Whatever good there is in him must have a fair chance—the best chance possible. These were the thoughts which inspired all that Hopper said to prisoners and all that he

did for them. He could be stern. But sometimes he astonished men into gratitude and respect, and so into a better state of mind, by his manner of showing that his sternness was meant as kindness. Here is an instance.

### TO CURE A BAD HABIT

There was a coloured man named Kane, a printer by trade, who was noted for his violent swearing. Hopper spoke to him privately about this bad habit, but without producing the least effect. One day, however, he met him in the street, pouring forth a volley of terrible oaths, enough to make one shudder; and, believing all gentler means vain, he took him before a magistrate, who fined him for blasphemy. He then lost sight of the man, till one day, twenty years afterwards, when he was standing at his door, Kane passed by. He looked old, feeble, and poor, and Hopper pitied him. He stepped out, shook hands with him, and said in kindly tones, ‘Dost thou remember me, how I caused thee to be fined for swearing?’

‘Yes, indeed I do,’ he replied. ‘I



remember how many dollars I paid, as well as if it were but yesterday.'

'Did it do thee any good?' inquired Hopper.

'Never a bit,' answered he. 'It only made me mad to have my money taken from me.'

The poor fellow was invited to walk into the house. The interest was calculated on the fine, and every cent repaid to him, with the following explanation: 'I meant it for thy good, and I am sorry that I only provoked thee.' Kane's countenance changed at once, and tears began to flow. He took the money with many thanks, and was never again heard to swear.

How many people would ever think of acting as Hopper did in this instance? Here are two other instances, which are of a kind more familiar to us in these days, but by no means common in Hopper's time.

### MARY NORRIS, VAGRANT

Mary Norris was a strong healthy woman, who was continually getting into prison as a vagrant or a thief. One

day Hopper, in making his rounds as inspector, said to her, 'Well, Mary, thy time is out next week. Dost thou think thou wilt come back again?' 'Yes,' she replied, sullenly. 'Dost thou like to come back?' he asked. 'No, to be sure I don't. But I've no doubt I *shall* come back before the month is out.' 'Why dost thou not make a resolution to behave better?' said he, in kindly tones. 'What use would it be?' she replied. 'You wouldn't take me into your family. The doctor wouldn't take me into his family. No respectable person would have anything to do with me. My associates *must* be such acquaintances as I make here. If they steal I am taken up for it, no matter whether I am guilty or not. I am an old convict, and nobody believes what I say. Oh yes, I shall come back again. To be sure, I shall come back,' she repeated bitterly.

Her voice and manner excited Hopper's compassion, and he thus addressed her: 'If I will get a place for thee in some respectable family where they will be kind to thee, wilt thou give me thy word that thou wilt be

honest and steady and try to do thy duty ? ’

Her countenance brightened, and she eagerly answered, ‘ Yes, I will ! And thank God and you too, the longest day I have to live.’

He managed to get her a situation, not precisely of the sort mentioned, but a suitable one—that of head-nurse at the almshouse, and she loyally fulfilled her part of the agreement. Seventeen years afterwards, when Hopper after a long interval called to see her and inquire about her, he found that she was as true to her promise as ever and as grateful to him.

### PATRICK McKEEVER, CONVICT

Patrick McKeeever was a poor Irishman in Philadelphia. He and another man were arrested on a charge of burglary, convicted, and sentenced to be hung. For some reason unrecorded Patrick was not hung, but suffered instead nine years’ imprisonment. During the last three of these years Hopper as inspector frequently talked with him. This was not easy, for hope seemed dead

within him. However, Hopper's keen eye saw a promise of good in him ; and it happened that on his release he passed the good man's house every day on his way to his work, and often got words of friendly encouragement. He was skilled at his trade of tanning leathers, and in other respects gave satisfaction to his employer.

This state of things continued, till one day news came to Hopper that Patrick was being sought by the police on account of a robbery committed the night before. He went straight to the mayor and inquired what this meant. The mayor confessed there was no evidence, but said, ' He is an old convict, and that is enough to condemn him.'

' It is not enough, by any means,' answered Hopper. ' Thou hast no right to arrest any citizen without a shadow of evidence against him. In this case I advise thee by all means to proceed with humane caution. This man has severely atoned for the crime he did commit ; and since he wishes to reform, his past history ought never to be mentioned against him. He has been perfectly honest, sober, and industrious since he

came out of prison. I think I know his state of mind ; and I am willing to take the responsibility of saying that he is guiltless in this matter.'

The mayor praised Hopper's benevolence, but met all his arguments with one reply : ' He is an old convict, and that is enough.'

As soon as possible Patrick was informed of what was about to take place. The poor fellow was struck with despair, and said with a deep sigh, ' Well, I suppose I must make up my mind to spend the remainder of my days in prison.'

' Thou wast not concerned in this robbery, wast thou ? ' asked Hopper.

' No, indeed I was not,' he replied. ' God be my witness, I want to lead an honest life, and be at peace with all men. But what good will that do me ? Everybody will say, he has been in the State Prison, and that is enough.'

Hopper was confirmed in his belief. But his advice to Patrick was, to go directly to the mayor, deliver himself up, and declare his innocence. This seemed only to deepen Patrick's gloom. ' I know what will come of it,' said he. ' They will put me in prison whether

there is any proof against me or not. They won't let me out without somebody will be security for me ; and who will be security for an old convict ? '

' Keep up a good heart,' replied Hopper. ' Go to the mayor and speak as I have advised thee. If they talk of putting thee in prison, send for me.'

Patrick went, and was treated precisely as he expected ; and Hopper had to appear on his behalf. ' I am ready to affirm,' said he, ' that I believe this man to be innocent. It will be a very serious injury for him to be taken from his business and detained in prison until this can be proved. Moreover, the effect upon his mind may be completely discouraging. I will be security for his appearance when called for ; and I know very well that he will not think of giving me the slip.'

The gratitude of the poor fellow was overwhelming. He sobbed till his strong frame shook like a leaf in the wind. The real culprits were soon after discovered. And the remaining thirty years of Patrick's life were a continuous justification of Hopper's belief in him.

## THEODORE PARKER'S PRAISE

These stories, selected from a large number, show in what spirit Isaac Hopper worked for prisoners. They belong to the earlier part of his life, but he was the same to the end. Well did Theodore Parker say of him : ' The Philanthropy of Isaac Hopper blessed the land. In his manhood it enriched the world ; in his old age it beautified his own life, giving an added glory to his soul.' One need say but little more. On his eightieth birthday he could write to his daughters, ' My eye is not dim, nor my natural force abated,' and he was still agent for the Prison Association. But hard work during the severe winter of 1852 proved too great a strain, and he was laid low with serious illness. He made continual efforts to conceal that he was in pain, and when asked why he was so often singing to himself, he replied, ' If I didn't sing, I should groan.' He had never been a groaner at any time or in any sense, and he would not groan at last. He passed away on July 3rd, 1852.

THE END





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